

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4246

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: AFSP, ASEC, APER, LE
SUBJECT: TRAVEL OF DEPENDENTS TO BEIRUT AND USE OF POV'S

REF: (A) BEIRUT 3058, (B) STATE 158658, (C) BEIRUT 3339,
(D) STATE 167058, (E) STATE 169214

1. FOLLOWING IS SITREP REQUESTED REF D RE RESIDENCE OF
DEPENDENT CHILDREN IN BEIRUT.

2. ALTHOUGH SCATTERED INCIDENTS CONTINUE TO TAKE PLACE IN
BEIRUT AND SHUF DISTRICT OF CENTRAL LEBANON, THE OVERALL
SECURITY SITUATION IN WEST BEIRUT, WHERE EMBASSY IS LOCATED
AND WHERE ALL OFFICIAL AMERICANS LIVE, HAS CONTINUED TO
IMPROVE SLOWLY. THERE ARE MORE LEBANESE POLICE ON THE STREETS,
MORE RESTAURANTS AND SHOPS ARE OPEN, CITY LIFE LOOKS
INCREASINGLY NORMAL, AND OTHER EMBASSIES AND FOREIGN
ESTABLISHMENTS ARE PERMITTING RETURN OF CHILDREN. AMERICAN
COMMUNITY SCHOOL, WHICH HAD ABOUT 59 STUDENTS LAST JUNE,
REPORTS 175 HAVE REGISTERED FOR THIS FALL. AUB REPORTS IT HAS
RECEIVED 4,000 APPLICATIONS FOR THE 1,000 PLACES IN ITS
ENTERING CLASS AND EXPECTS TO HAVE A TOTAL OF 3,500
STUDENTS ON CAMPUS THIS FALL.

3. DESPITE THESE ENCOURAGING SIGNS, I FULLY REALIZE
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THAT NOTHING HAS BEEN SETTLED AND WE ARE NOT YET OUT OF
THE WOODS. I HAVE THEREFORE GIVEN CAREFUL THOUGHT TO
THE QUESTION OF HAVING MINOR DEPENDENTS RETURN,
CONSIDERING THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:

4. OFFICIAL AMERICAN ASSIGNED TO BEIRUT HAVE FACED AND
CONTINUE TO FACE TWO KINDS OF DANGERS. THE FIRST IS

THE POSSIBILITY OF ATTACKS DIRECTED AGAINST OFFICIAL AMERICANS BECAUSE THEY WORK FOR THE USG. ON BALANCE, I DO NOT THINK THIS THREAT IS SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER IN BEIRUT TODAY THAN IT IS IN OTHER ARAB CAPITALS, AND PERHAPS ELSEWHERE.

5. THE SECOND KIND OF DANGER IS BEING IN THE WRONG PLACE AT THE WRONG TIME WHEN A BOMB GOES OFF OR A FIRE FIGHT STARTS. ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE RECENTLY BEEN BOMB EXPLOSIONS IN RAS BEIRUT, MOST OF THE INCIDENTS AND TROUBLES DURING THE PAST NINE MONTHS HAVE OCCURRED IN AREAS THAT ARE KNOWN TROUBLE SPOTS (THE SHUF, FOR EXAMPLE) OR IN PLACES THAT ARE NOT FREQUENTED BY AMERICANS. IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE THE POSSIBILITY OF OUR EMPLOYEES AND THEIR DEPENDENTS GETTING CAUGHT IN THE CROSS-FIRE, WE HAVE STRICTLY CONTROLLED MOVEMENTS OF ALL PERSONNEL AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO (SEE BELOW). I REALIZE, OF COURSE, THAT THIS DOES NOT ELIMINATE THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOMEONE MAY GET HURT, BUT THIS COULD HAPPEN ANYWHERE. I SUSPECT FOR EXAMPLE THAT THERE HAVE BEEN AS MANY BOMB INCIDENTS IN JERUSALEM AS IN BEIRUT IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS.

6. FINALLY, THE NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS WHO MAY COME HERE IS SMALL AND THE OFFICERS WHO ARE CONSIDERING HAVING THEIR DEPENDENTS JOIN THEM -- THE DCM, THE DATT, THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAO, AND POLOFF, ARE ALL EXPERIENCED OFFICERS WHO HAVE BEEN IN BEIRUT FOR SOME TIME. THEY KNOW THE SITUATION HERE AS WELL AS I DO. IF THEY WANT THEIR FAMILIES TO JOIN THEM, THEY ARE MATURE ENOUGH TO MAKE THE DECISION THEMSELVES.

7. AS THE ABOVE INDICATES, WHILE I RECOGNIZE THERE ARE RISKS IN HAVING MINOR DEPENDENTS HERE, I DO NOT THINK THEY ARE GREAT ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY THE DEPT FORBIDDING THEM TO SOME. I THEREFORE CONFIRM MY RECOMMENDATION IN REF A THAT FAMILIES BE PERMITTED TO COME TO THIS POST, AT EMPLOYEE'S OPTION, IN TIME FOR OPENING OF SCHOOL (ACS) ON SEPTEMBER 26, AS AUTHORIZED BY THE DEPARTMENT IN REF D.

8. ON THE QUESTION OF USE OF POV'S, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD ALLOW AMERICAN STAFF TO IMPORT AND USE THEM, UNDER STRICT RULES THAT HAVE BEEN DRAWN UP BY RSO (COPIES BEING POUCHED SY AND ARN). FROM THE SECURITY POINT OF VIEW, THE SAFEST SOLUTION WOULD BE TO USE EMBASSY CARS AND DRIVERS FOR EVERYONE AT ALL TIMES. HOWEVER, WITH 43 AMERICAN PERSONNEL (INCLUDING MARINES)

NOW ON BOARD OR DUE BEFORE DECEMBER 31, IT IS SIMPLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR EMBASSY TO PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION, UNLESS WE DOUBLE THE SIZE OF THE EMBASSY'S VEHICLE FLEET AND THE NUMBER OF DRIVERS. WE ASSUME DEPT WOULD NOT APPROVE SUCH AN INCREASE. USE OF TAXIS IS IMPRACTICAL ON MANY OCCASIONS AND OFTEN POSES AS MANY SECURITY PROBLEMS AS IT SOLVES.

9. FURTHERMORE, SENIOR OFFICERS, I.E., DCM, DATT, PAO, HAVE USG TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE, WHICH JUNIOR PERSONNEL DO NOT. FROM A MORALE POINT OF VIEW, IT WOULD BE UNFAIR AND UNFORTUNATE TO PERMIT THE SENIOR OFFICERS AND THEIR FAMILIES TO CIRCULATE WHILE DENYING FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT TO OTHER PERSONNEL. I AM THEREFORE CONFIDENTIAL

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AUTHORIZING THOSE WHO NOW HAVE POV'S AT POST, (I.E., CONSULAR OFFICER MARGARET MURPHY, WHO MUCH TO OUR SURPRISE WAS AUTHORIZED BY THE DEPT TO SHIP HER POV, AND POLOFF HUGH TURNER WHO HAD TO SHIP HIS CAR FROM PREVIOUS POST OR LOSE IT) TO USE THEM, AND I REQUEST THAT DEPT NOW AUTHORIZE SHIPMENT OF POV'S TO BEIRUT. ALTHOUGH RSO WAS RELUCTANT TO CONCUR IN USE OF POV'S, HE AGREES WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE GIVEN FACTORS CITED ABOVE AND BELIEVES WE CAN ESTABLISH AND ENFORCE A SET OF REGULATIONS THAT WILL REDUCE THE RISK TO ACCEPTABLE LEVELS. AFTER ALL, EVEN IN THE BEST OF TIMES, LEBANON WAS NEVER A SAFE PLACE IN WHICH TO DRIVE.
PARKER

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